

# KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## SCHOOL DISTRICTS RECEIVE GUIDANCE ON FLU

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Although the swine flu (H1N1) virus has not affected Kentucky dramatically, public school districts now have guidance on procedures to use in the event that the virus affects their communities.

The Kentucky Department for Public Health provided guidance that was shared with school district superintendents by Interim Education Commissioner Elaine Farris yesterday. The guidance includes a number of recommendations:

- Schools and childcare facilities should increase education on respiratory hygiene and monitor students and staff for acute febrile respiratory illness.
- Staff and children (as developmentally appropriate) should all be taught and asked to follow these steps that prevent the transmission of infections such as influenza:
  - Cover your coughs and sneezes into a tissue or the inside of your elbow, not into your bare hands.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
  - Wash hands frequently, especially after coughing or sneezing.
  - Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
  - Stay home if you're sick, especially with a fever.
- Dismissal of students should be strongly considered in schools with a confirmed or a suspected case epidemiologically linked to a confirmed case.
- If the school dismisses students or a childcare facility closes, all school- or childcare-related gatherings should be canceled, and parents and students should be encouraged to avoid congregating outside of the school.
- Schools and childcare facilities should dismiss students for a time period to be evaluated on an ongoing basis depending upon epidemiological findings.
- Schools and childcare facilities should consult with their local or state health departments for guidance on reopening. If no additional confirmed or suspected cases are identified among students (or school-based personnel) for a period of seven days, schools may consider reopening.

(more)

Visit our Web site at <http://www.education.ky.gov>.

All decisions related to school dismissal within communities that may be affected by the H1N1 virus are under the authority of local school officials. “Childcare facilities” are defined as centers and facilities that provide care to any number of children in a nonresidential setting; large-family childcare homes that provide care for seven or more children in the home of the provider; and small family childcare homes that provide care to six or fewer children in the home of the provider.

The Department of Health recommends that schools and childcare facilities in unaffected areas begin to prepare for the possibility of school dismissal or childcare facility closure. This includes asking teachers, parents and officials in charge of critical school-associated programs (such as meal services) to make contingency plans.

The Kentucky Department of Education will continue to provide information and resources related to this issue as they become available.

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